

# Plato's *Euthyphro*

[Or, On the Pious]<sup>1</sup>

EUTHYPHRO.<sup>2</sup> What is new, Socrates, that you have left the places 2a<sup>3</sup>  
in Lyceum where you usually spend your time and are now spend-  
ing time here around the Porch of the King?<sup>4</sup> For surely you don't  
also happen to have some lawsuit before the King, as I do.

SOCRATES. In fact, Euthyphro, the Athenians don't call it a law-  
suit, but an indictment.<sup>5</sup>

EUTHYPHRO. What are you saying? Someone, as is likely, has b  
brought an indictment against you. For I won't charge you with  
doing so against another.

<sup>1</sup>"Or, On the Pious" may be Plato's subtitle or, more likely, may have been added by a later Greek editor.

<sup>2</sup>About the man Euthyphro nothing is known besides what appears in this dialogue, except that the inspired and "wise" etymologist named Euthyphro, mentioned with (ironic?) praise by Socrates in the *Cratylus* (396d and elsewhere), may be the same man. (In the notes to these translations works mentioned without an author are by Plato.) The name Euthyphro is composed of elements that mean "straight" (*euthy*) and "thought" (*phrōn*).

<sup>3</sup>The marginal numbers and letters (2a, 2b, etc.) are from Stephanus' Renaissance edition of Plato; they are used today as standard pagination in most editions and translations.

<sup>4</sup>Socrates frequented the gymnasium at Lyceum, a suburb of Athens, where he would converse with the young men who came there to exercise and socialize (*Symposium* 223d, *Lysis* 203a, *Euthydemus* 271a). The "King," a public official or archon selected annually by lot, had jurisdiction over the "preliminary inquiry" in judicial cases involving matters concerning the gods, such as impiety. His office, being a remote descendant of the kingship of Athens' distant past, retained vestiges of the ancient kings' authority in the city over sacred things. He performed "the most venerable and ancestral of the ancient sacrifices" (*Statesman* 290e). The Porch (Stoa) of the King was a public building in the marketplace.

<sup>5</sup>"Lawsuit" (*dikē*) and "indictment" (*graphē*) are technical judicial terms. *Dikē* was the general term for "case," whether public or private, although sometimes (as in Euthyphro's case here) *dikē* refers specifically to private injury. (Murder was viewed as an injury not to the city but to the family of the victim.) A *graphē*, on the other hand, is a case in which injury to the public is alleged, as in the present case of Socrates. The literal meaning of *dikē* is "justice"; of *graphē*, "writing."

SOCRATES. Certainly not.

EUTHYPHRO. But someone else against you?

SOCRATES. Quite so.

EUTHYPHRO. Who is he?

SOCRATES. I myself don't even recognize the man at all, Euthyphro. He is apparently someone young and unknown. But they say his name is Meletus, as I suppose. He is from the deme Pittheus,<sup>6</sup> if you can think of some Pitthean Meletus with long straight hair, not quite full-bearded, but somewhat hook-nosed.

EUTHYPHRO. I can't think of him, Socrates. But what indictment has he brought against you?

SOCRATES. What indictment? Not an ignoble<sup>7</sup> one, it seems to me at least. For it is no paltry thing for one who is so young to have become cognizant of so great a matter. For as he asserts, he knows in what way the young are corrupted and who their corrupters are. And he is probably someone wise, and having discerned my ignorance, he is going before the city, as if before his mother, to accuse me of corrupting those of his own age. And he alone of the politicians<sup>8</sup> appears to me to begin correctly. For it is correct to take care of the young first, so that they will be the best possible, just as a good farmer properly takes care of the young plants first, and after this of the others as well. And so Meletus is perhaps first cleaning us out, the corrupters of the young sprouts, as he asserts. Then, after this, it is clear that when he has taken care of the older ones, he will become the cause of the most and greatest good things for the city. At least that is the likely outcome for someone beginning from such a beginning.

EUTHYPHRO. So I would wish, Socrates, but I am afraid that the opposite will happen. For he seems to me simply to be doing evil to the city, beginning from the hearth, by attempting to do injustice to you. Tell me, what does he assert that you do<sup>9</sup> to corrupt the young?

SOCRATES. Strange things, you wondrous man, at least on first hearing. For he asserts that I am a maker of gods, and on this account—that I make novel gods and don't believe in the ancient ones—he has indicted me, as he asserts.

<sup>6</sup>A *deme* is a political subdivision of Athens.

<sup>7</sup>"Ignoble" translates *agennes*, literally, "not well born." This term is to be distinguished from *kalon*, always translated "noble" in the *Euthyphro*. See *Apology* n. 16.

<sup>8</sup>The term *politikoi* is not pejorative; it might also be translated "statesmen."

<sup>9</sup>The word translated "do" is *poiein*, the same word translated "make" in Socrates' reply. The word "maker" is *poiētēs*: Socrates is accused of being a "poet" of gods.

3b

EUTHYPHRO. I understand, Socrates; it's because you assert that the *daimonion*<sup>10</sup> comes to you on occasion. So he has brought this indictment, claiming that you are making innovations concerning the divine things, and he is going into the law court to slander you, knowing that such things are easy to make slander about before the many. And me too—whenever I say something in the Assembly concerning the divine things, predicting for them what will be, they laugh at me as if I were mad. And yet, of the things I have foretold, I have spoken nothing that is not true. Nevertheless, they envy us all who are of this sort. But one should not give any thought to them, but should confront them.

c

SOCRATES. My dear Euthyphro, being laughed at is perhaps no matter. For in fact the Athenians, as it seems to me, do not much care about someone whom they suppose to be clever, unless he is a skillful teacher of his own wisdom. But their spiritedness is aroused against anyone who they suppose makes others like himself, either from envy, as you say, or because of something else.

d

EUTHYPHRO. That's why I do not at all desire to try out how they are disposed toward me in this regard.

SOCRATES. Perhaps *you* seem to make yourself available only infrequently and not to be willing to teach your own wisdom. But I fear that *I*, because of my philanthropy, seem to them to say profusely whatever I possess to every man, not only without pay, but even paying with pleasure if anyone is willing to listen to me. So if, as I was saying just now, they were going to laugh at me, as you say they do at you, it would not be unpleasant to pass the time in the law court joking and laughing. But if they are going to be serious, then how this will turn out now is unclear except to you diviners.<sup>11</sup>

e

EUTHYPHRO. Perhaps it will be no matter, Socrates, and your contesting of the lawsuit will proceed as you have a mind for it to do, as I suppose mine will too.

SOCRATES. And your lawsuit, Euthyphro, what is it? Are you defending or prosecuting?

EUTHYPHRO. Prosecuting.

SOCRATES. Whom?

EUTHYPHRO. Someone whom in prosecuting I again seem mad.

4a

<sup>10</sup>Socrates explains his *daimonion*, his daimonic or divine sign, in *Apology* 31c–d. The actual impiety charge against him was: "He does not believe in the gods in whom the city believes, and he brings in other *daimonia* [divine or daimonic things] that are new." See *Apology* nn. 37, 38, 56.

<sup>11</sup>A "diviner" is a *mantis*, a seer or prophet. See *Apology* n. 30 on "divination."

SOCRATES. What then? Are you prosecuting someone who flies?<sup>12</sup>

4a

EUTHYPHRO. He is far from flying; in fact, he happens to be quite old.

SOCRATES. Who is he?

EUTHYPHRO. My father.

SOCRATES. Your father, best of men?

EUTHYPHRO. Certainly.

SOCRATES. What is the charge, and what is the lawsuit about?

EUTHYPHRO. Murder, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Heracles! Surely the many, Euthyphro, are ignorant of what way is correct. For I don't suppose that it is the part of just anyone to do this correctly, but of one who is no doubt already far advanced in wisdom.<sup>13</sup>

b

EUTHYPHRO. Far indeed, by Zeus, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Is the man who was killed by your father one of your family? Or isn't it clear? For surely you wouldn't proceed against him for murder on behalf of an outsider.

EUTHYPHRO. It's laughable, Socrates, that you suppose that it makes any difference whether the dead man is an outsider or of the family, rather than that one should be on guard only for whether the killer killed with justice or not; and if it was with justice, to let it go, but if not, to proceed against him—if, that is, the killer shares your hearth and table. For the pollution turns out to be equal if you knowingly associate with such a man and do not purify<sup>14</sup> yourself, as well as him, by proceeding against him in a lawsuit.

c

Now the man who died was a laborer of mine, and when we were farming on Naxos,<sup>15</sup> he was serving us there for hire. So in a drunken fit he gets angry with one of the family servants and cuts his throat. So my father, binding his feet and hands together and throwing him into a ditch, sends a man here to ask the exegete<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>Socrates plays on the word prosecute, *diōkein*, which literally means "pursue." Euthyphro's suit is likened to a wild-geese chase.

<sup>13</sup>Socrates is surprised, and Euthyphro seems (is reputed to be) mad, because murder prosecutions were ordinarily brought by a member of the family of the victim, certainly not by someone from the family of the alleged murderer.

<sup>14</sup>The crime of homicide was thought to be a personal injury to the dead man's family and to create a religious pollution for those who consorted with the murderer. The word "purify" is *aphosioun*, related to *hosion*, "pious" (n. 17). The "King" (n. 4) had jurisdiction over homicide cases because of the pollution created by murder.

<sup>15</sup>Naxos was a colony of Athens until she lost the Peloponnesian War with Sparta in 404, five years before the time of this dialogue. Euthyphro does not explain the long delay between the alleged crime, which presumably occurred in 404 or even earlier, and his prosecution of his father.

<sup>16</sup>Athens had several officials called "exegetes" (interpreters), who expounded the sacred and ancestral laws of the city. In this sentence "here" means "to Athens."

what he should do. During this time he paid little attention to the man he had bound and was careless of him, on the ground that he was a murderer and it was no matter even if he should die, which is just what happened to him. For because of hunger and cold and the bonds, he dies before the messenger returns from the exegete.

4d

This, then, is just why my father and the rest of my family are indignant: because on behalf of the murderer I am proceeding against my father for murder, although he didn't kill him, as they assert, and besides, even if he did kill him, since the man who died was a murderer anyway, they say that one needn't give any thought to someone of that sort—for it is impious for a son to proceed against his father for murder—they knowing badly, Socrates, how the divine is disposed concerning the pious and the impious.<sup>17</sup>

e

SOCRATES. But before Zeus, do you, Euthyphro, suppose you have such precise knowledge about how the divine things are disposed, and the pious and impious things, that, assuming that these things were done just as you say, you don't fear that by pursuing a lawsuit against your father, you in turn may happen to be doing an impious act?

EUTHYPHRO. No, there would be no benefit for me, Socrates, nor would Euthyphro be any different from the many human beings, if I didn't know all such things precisely.

5a

SOCRATES. Then, wondrous Euthyphro, wouldn't it be best for me to become your student and, before Meletus' indictment comes to trial, to challenge him on these very things? I would say that even in time past I regarded it as important to know the divine things, and now, since he asserts that I am doing wrong by acting unadvisedly and making innovations concerning the divine things, I have become your student. "And, Meletus," I would say, "if you agree that Euthyphro is wise in such things, then hold that I too believe correctly and drop the lawsuit. But if not, then bring a lawsuit against him, my teacher, instead of me, on the ground that he is corrupting the old, me and his own father, by teaching me and by admonishing and punishing him." And if he isn't persuaded by me and doesn't give up the lawsuit or indict you instead

b

<sup>17</sup>The "pious" (*hosion*) refers in the traditional usage of the Greek language to that which is allocated by the gods to men. This may be thought of in two aspects: (1) that which is prescribed by the gods to men, both concerning men's proper dealings with one another (in contrast to merely human law and justice) and also concerning men's proper conduct toward the gods; (2) that which is permitted or given by the gods to men, in contrast to the sacred (*hieron*), which the gods reserve to themselves. Priests and temples are *hieron*, sacred, while the rest of the city, given over to men, is *hosion*, pious or (in contrast to sacred) profane.



of me, shouldn't I say in the law court these very things on which I challenged him? 5b

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, if he should then attempt to indict me, I would discover, as I suppose, where he is rotten, and our speech in the law court would turn out to be much more about him than about me. c

SOCRATES. And since I am cognizant of these things, my dear comrade, I do desire to become your student, knowing that neither this Meletus nor, no doubt, anyone else even seems to see you; but me he discerns so sharply and easily that he has indicted me for impiety.<sup>18</sup> So tell me now, before Zeus, what you just now strongly affirmed that you know plainly: what sort of things do you say the pious and the impious<sup>19</sup> are, concerning murder and concerning other things? Or isn't the pious itself the same as itself in every action, and again, isn't the impious opposite to everything pious, while it itself is similar to itself and has one certain *idea*<sup>20</sup> in accordance with impiety—everything, that is, that is going to be impious? d

EUTHYPHRO. Entirely so, doubtless, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Speak, then, what do you say the pious is, and what the impious? e

EUTHYPHRO. I say, then, that the pious is just what I am doing now: to proceed against whoever does injustice regarding murders or thefts of sacred things, or is doing wrong in any other such thing, whether he happens to be a father or mother or anyone else at all; and not to proceed against him is impious. Now contemplate, Socrates, how great a proof I will tell you that the law is so disposed—a proof, which I have already told to others as well, that these things would be correctly done if they take place in this way—that one is not to give way to the impious<sup>21</sup> one, whoever he

<sup>18</sup>The term is *asebeia*, the name of the legal crime of impiety. *Asebeia* is closely related to *asebes*, "impious" or "irreverent," and is the opposite of *eusebes*, "pious" or "reverent." (However, the words "reverent" and "irreverent" are not quite strong enough as translations.) *Eusebes* is similar in meaning to *hosion* ("pious"), but *eusebes* emphasizes the reverence and respect, even fear, which one feels or ought to feel toward the gods. To distinguish it from *hosion* and cognates (always translated "pious," etc.), we will note all instances of *eusebes* and cognates.

<sup>19</sup>In this sentence "pious" and "impious" translate *eusebes* and *asebes*.

<sup>20</sup>The Greek word *idea*, here left untranslated, literally means "look." The word *eidos*, of similar meaning, is also left untranslated at 6d below. These are the terms used by Plato in his so-called doctrine of ideas (e.g. "the idea of the good," *Republic* 505a). The *idea* or *eidos* of a thing may be thought of as the look it has, in the mind's eye, when it is truly seen for what it is.

<sup>21</sup>The term is *asebes* (n. 18).

happens to be. Human beings themselves believe that Zeus is the best and most just of the gods, at the same time that they agree that he bound his own father because he gulped down his sons without justice, and that the latter, in turn, castrated his own father because of other such things.<sup>22</sup> Yet they are angry at me because I am proceeding against my father when he has done injustice, and so they contradict themselves both concerning the gods and concerning me. 5e 6a

SOCRATES. Is this, Euthyphro, why I am a defendant against the indictment: that whenever someone says such things about the gods, I receive them somehow with annoyance? Because of this, as is likely, someone will assert that I am a wrongdoer. So now, if these things seem so to you too, who know well about such things, it is certainly necessary, as is likely, for us to concede them as well. For what else shall we say, since we ourselves also agree that we know nothing about them? But tell me, before the god of friendship,<sup>23</sup> do you truly hold that these things have happened in this way? b

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, and things even more wondrous than these, Socrates, which the many do not know.

SOCRATES. And do you hold that there really is war among the gods against one another, and terrible enmities and battles, and many other such things, as are spoken of by the poets and with which our sacred things have been adorned by the good painters, particularly the robe filled with such adornments which is brought up to the Acropolis in the Great Panathenaea?<sup>24</sup> Shall we assert that these things are true, Euthyphro? c

<sup>22</sup>Hesiod and later Greek poets report that Kronos castrated his father Ouranos (Heaven) at the urging of his mother Gaia (Earth). She had sought vengeance against Ouranos because he hid away their children within the earth as soon as they were born. Kronos in turn swallowed his own children at birth because of a prophecy that one of his sons would overthrow him. But Kronos' wife concealed baby Zeus from Kronos, and Zeus eventually led the Olympian gods in a successful war against Kronos and the other Titans (Giants) at the end of which Kronos and the Titans were imprisoned. (Hesiod, *Theogony* 132–182, 453–506, 617–819.) In the poem, Gaia explains Kronos' castration of Ouranos as a punishment for evil-doing, but Zeus claims no such justification for his violent overthrow of Kronos. Euthyphro, however, sees in both actions a concern for justice.

<sup>23</sup>The oath refers to Zeus, the god and protector of friendship. In the previous sentence (and elsewhere in these dialogues) Socrates employs the common Greek practice of using "we" and "us" as a modest way of referring to himself.

<sup>24</sup>The Athenians held an annual festival in honor of their patron goddess Athena with games, sacrifices, and a procession which carried the robe of Athena up to her temple on the Acropolis. The robe, which was embroidered by Athenian girls, depicted among other things the battle between the Olympian gods and the Titans. Every fourth year the festival was celebrated with particular magnificence and was called the "Great" Panathenaea. The word in this sentence translated as "sacred things" (*hiera*) may also mean "temples" (see n. 17).

EUTHYPHRO. Not only these, Socrates, but as I said just now, I will also explain many other things to you, if you wish, about the divine things; and when you hear them, I know well that you will be astounded.

SOCRATES. I shouldn't wonder. But you will explain these things to me some other time, at leisure. Now, however, try to say more plainly what I was asking you just now. For you did not teach me sufficiently earlier, comrade, when I asked what ever the pious is. Instead, you told me that what you are now doing, proceeding against your father for murder, happens to be pious.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, and what I was saying is true, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Perhaps. But in fact, Euthyphro, you also say that many other things are pious.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, and so they are.

SOCRATES. Do you remember that I didn't bid you to teach me some one or two of the many pious things, but that *eidos* itself by which all the pious things are pious? For surely you were saying that it is by one *idea* that the impious things are impious and the pious things pious. Or don't you remember?

EUTHYPHRO. I do.

SOCRATES. Then teach me what ever this *idea* itself is, so that by gazing at it and using it as a pattern, I may declare that whatever is like it, among the things you or anyone else may do, is pious, and that whatever is not like it is not.

EUTHYPHRO. If this is the way that you wish, Socrates, I'll tell you in this way too.

SOCRATES. Yes, that's just what I wish.

EUTHYPHRO. Then what is dear to the gods is pious, and what is not dear is impious.

SOCRATES. Altogether noble, Euthyphro. You have now answered just as I was seeking for you to answer. Whether it is true, however, I don't yet know. But clearly you will go on to teach me that what you say is true.

EUTHYPHRO. Certainly.

SOCRATES. Come then, let us consider what we are saying. The thing dear-to-the-gods and human being dear-to-the-gods are pious, while the thing hateful-to-the-gods and he who is hateful-to-the-gods are impious.<sup>25</sup> The pious is not the same as the impious, but most opposite. Isn't this so?

<sup>25</sup>The expression "dear-to-the-gods" translates the single Greek word *theophiles* ("god-dear," "god-loved"). Without the hyphens, "dear to the gods" translates *prospheiles tois theois*. Likewise with "hateful-to-the-gods." The *phil-* root, here rendered "dear," is translated "to love" when it occurs in its verb form, *philein*. The noun *philos* is "friend."



EUTHYPHRO. This is so.

7a

SOCRATES. And it appears to have been well said?

EUTHYPHRO. It seems so to me, Socrates, for that is what was said.

b

SOCRATES. But wasn't it also said that the gods quarrel, Euthyphro, and differ with each other, and that there are enmities among them toward each other?

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, that is what was said.

SOCRATES. What is the difference *about*, best of men, that makes for enmity and anger? Let's consider as follows. If you and I should differ about number—which of two groups of things is greater—would our difference about these things make us enemies and angry at each other? Or would we go to calculation and quickly settle it, at least about such things as these?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

c

SOCRATES. And if we should differ about the greater and less, wouldn't we go to measuring and quickly put a stop to our difference?

EUTHYPHRO. That is so.

SOCRATES. And would we go to weighing, as I suppose, to come to a decision about the heavier and lighter?

EUTHYPHRO. Of course.

SOCRATES. Then what would we differ about and what decision would we be unable to reach, that we would be enemies and angry at each other? Perhaps you have nothing ready to hand, but consider while I speak whether it is these things: the just and the unjust, and noble and shameful, and good and bad. Isn't it because we differ about these things and can't come to a sufficient decision about them that we become enemies to each other, whenever we do, both I and you and all other human beings?

d

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, this is the difference, Socrates, and about these things.

SOCRATES. What about the gods, Euthyphro? If they do differ at all, wouldn't they differ because of these same things?

EUTHYPHRO. Most necessarily.

SOCRATES. Then among the gods too, well-born Euthyphro, some believe some things just, others believe others, according to your argument, and noble and shameful and good and bad. For surely they wouldn't quarrel with each other unless they differed about these things, would they?

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EUTHYPHRO. What you say is correct.

SOCRATES. And don't they each also love whatever they believe noble and good and just, and hate the opposites of these?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

7e

SOCRATES. But the same things, as you assert, some believe just, and others unjust; and in disputing about these things they quarrel and war with each other. Isn't this so?

8a

EUTHYPHRO. It is so.

SOCRATES. Then the same things, as is likely, are both hated and loved by the gods, and the same things would be hateful-to-the-gods as well as dear-to-the-gods.

EUTHYPHRO. It's likely.

SOCRATES. Then the same things would be both pious and impious, Euthyphro, by this argument.

EUTHYPHRO. Probably.

SOCRATES. Then you didn't answer what I asked, you wondrous man. For I wasn't asking what same thing is at once both pious and impious: whatever is dear-to-the-gods is also hateful-to-the-gods, as is likely. Consequently, Euthyphro, in doing what you are now doing, punishing your father, it is nothing wondrous if you are doing something dear to Zeus but hateful to Kronos and Ouranos, and dear to Hephaestus but hateful to Hera.<sup>26</sup> And if there are other gods who differ with one another about it, it is so with them in the same way.

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EUTHYPHRO. But I suppose, Socrates, that none of the gods differs one with another about this, at least: that whoever kills someone unjustly must pay the penalty.

SOCRATES. What, then? Have you ever heard any human being claim in a dispute that one who kills unjustly, or does anything else at all unjustly, need not pay the penalty?

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EUTHYPHRO. Certainly. They don't stop disputing in this way, especially in the law courts. For although they have done very many injustices, they will do and say anything at all to escape the penalty.

SOCRATES. Do they in fact agree, Euthyphro, that they have done injustice, and having agreed, do they nevertheless assert that they need not pay the penalty?

EUTHYPHRO. In no way, not this at least.

<sup>26</sup>For Kronos and Ouranos, see n. 22. Father-punishing is perhaps dear to Hephaestus because he was once cast down violently from heaven by his father Zeus (*Iliad* 1.586–594). It may be hateful to Hera because it would mean the overthrow of her husband Zeus, through whom she holds prominence among the gods. Alternatively, Hera may fear that father-punishing could be a prelude to mother-punishing (as in Aristophanes, *Clouds* 1443). There is also a story that Hera once threw Hephaestus down from heaven, in retaliation for which Hephaestus sent Hera a throne which bound her with invisible bonds when she sat down. It should be noted that father-punishing is a persistent if subdued theme of the *Euthyphro*, as it is an explicit theme of the *Clouds*.

SOCRATES. Then they will not do and say anything at all. For I suppose they don't dare to dispute by saying that even if they have done injustice they need not pay the penalty. Instead, I suppose they assert that they haven't done injustice, don't they?

8c

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EUTHYPHRO. What you say is true.

SOCRATES. Then they don't dispute by claiming that the doer of injustice need not pay the penalty; instead, they perhaps dispute who the doer of injustice is, and what he did, and when.

EUTHYPHRO. What you say is true.

SOCRATES. Aren't the gods also affected in the same way, if they do in fact quarrel about the just and unjust things, as your argument says? Don't some of them assert that others do injustice while the others deny it? For surely, you wondrous man, no god or human being dares to say that the doer of injustice ought not to pay the penalty.

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EUTHYPHRO. Yes, in this, Socrates, what you say is true, at least in the main.

SOCRATES. But I suppose, Euthyphro, that the disputants dispute about each of the particular things done, both human beings and gods, if gods do dispute. They differ about a certain action, some asserting that it was done justly, others unjustly. Isn't this so?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. Come then, my dear Euthyphro, teach me too, so that I may become wiser, what your proof is that all gods believe that that man died unjustly who while serving for hire became a murderer, and then, bound by the master of the man who died, met his end because of his bonds before the one who bound him found out from the exegetes what he should do about him; and that it is correct for a son to proceed against his father and denounce him for murder on behalf of someone of this sort. Come, try to show me in some way plainly about these things, that all gods believe more than anything that this action is correct. And if you show me sufficiently, I will never stop extolling you for wisdom.

9a

b

EUTHYPHRO. But perhaps it is no small work, Socrates, although I could display it to you quite plainly.

SOCRATES. I understand. It's because I seem to you to be poorer at learning than the judges, since clearly you will show *them* that such things are unjust and that all the gods hate them.

EUTHYPHRO. Quite plainly, Socrates, at least if they do listen to me when I speak.

SOCRATES. They will listen, if you do seem to speak well. But while you were speaking, I thought of the following and I am considering it with regard to myself: "Even if Euthyphro should

c

teach me that all the gods believe that such a death is unjust, what more will I have learned from Euthyphro about what ever the pious and the impious are? For although this deed would be hateful-to-the-gods, as is likely, it became apparent just now that the pious and the not pious are not defined by this, for it became apparent that the hateful-to-the-gods is also dear-to-the-gods."

So I will let you off from this, Euthyphro. If you wish, let all the gods believe it unjust and let all hate it. But is this the correction that we are now making in the argument: that whatever all the gods hate is impious, and whatever they love is pious, but whatever some love and others hate is neither or both? Is this how you now wish it to be defined by us concerning the pious and the impious?

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, for what prevents it, Socrates?

SOCRATES. Nothing on my part, Euthyphro. But consider on your part whether by positing<sup>27</sup> this you will most easily teach me what you promised.

EUTHYPHRO. Well, I would say that the pious is whatever all the gods love, and that the opposite, whatever all gods hate, is impious.

SOCRATES. So shouldn't we consider again, Euthyphro, whether this is said nobly?<sup>28</sup> Or should we let it go and just accept what we ourselves and others say, conceding that something is so if only someone asserts that it is? Or ought we to consider what the speaker says?

EUTHYPHRO. It ought to be considered. However, I suppose that this is now said nobly.

SOCRATES. Soon, my good man, we will know better. Think about something like the following. Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved?

EUTHYPHRO. I don't know what you are saying, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then I will try to explain more plainly. We speak of something carried and carrying, and of led and leading, and seen and seeing. And do you understand that all such things are different from each other and how they are different?

EUTHYPHRO. It seems to me that I understand.

SOCRATES. And isn't there also something loved and, different from this, the thing loving?

EUTHYPHRO. Of course.

<sup>27</sup>"Positing" translates *hypotithesthai*, "hypothesize," i.e., "set down as an underlying basis." At 11c, "suppositions" translates *hypotheseis*.

<sup>28</sup>For the Greeks something is "nobly" (or "beautifully") said when it is spoken aptly and to the point (though perhaps not in every case truly: see 7a). The word is *kalon*.



SOCRATES. Then tell me, is the thing carried something carried because it is carried, or because of something else?<sup>29</sup> 10b

EUTHYPHRO. No, it is because of this.

SOCRATES. And the thing led because it is led, and the thing seen because it is seen?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. Then it isn't because it is something seen that it is seen, but the opposite: because it is seen, it is something seen. Nor is it because it is something led that it is led; rather, because it is led, it is something led. Nor because it is something carried is it carried; rather, because it is carried, it is something carried. Isn't it quite clear, Euthyphro, what I wish to say? I wish to say that if something comes to be something or is affected, it isn't because it is something coming to be that it comes to be, but because it comes to be, it is something coming to be. Nor because it is something affected, is it affected; rather, because it is affected, it is something affected. Or don't you concede that this is so? c

EUTHYPHRO. I do.

SOCRATES. And isn't the thing loved either something coming to be or something affected by something?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. Then this too is just like the previous ones. Not because it is something loved, is it loved by those by whom it is loved, but because it is loved, it is something loved.

EUTHYPHRO. Necessarily.

SOCRATES. Now what are we saying about the pious, Euthyphro? Isn't it loved by all gods, as your argument says? d

EUTHYPHRO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Because it is pious, or because of something else?

EUTHYPHRO. No, it's because of this.

SOCRATES. Then is it loved because it is pious, rather than pious because it is loved?

EUTHYPHRO. It's likely.

SOCRATES. But in fact, just because it is loved by gods, it is something loved and dear-to-the-gods.<sup>30</sup>

EUTHYPHRO. Of course.

SOCRATES. Then the dear-to-the-gods is not pious, Euthyphro, nor is the pious dear-to-the-gods, as you say, but the one is different from the other.

<sup>29</sup>In the following discussion Socrates makes use of passive participles (e.g., *pheromenon*, "something carried") and the passive form of the verb (e.g., *pheretai*, "it is carried").

<sup>30</sup>"It is loved" is *phileitai*; "something loved" is *philoumenon*; "dear-to-the-gods" is *theophiles* (see n. 25).

EUTHYPHRO. How so, Socrates?

10e

SOCRATES. Because we agree that the pious is loved because it is pious, not that it is pious because it is loved, don't we?

EUTHYPHRO. Yes.

SOCRATES. And further, that the dear-to-the-gods, because it is loved by gods, is dear-to-the-gods by this very fact of being loved, and not that it is loved because it is dear-to-the-gods.

EUTHYPHRO. What you say is true.

SOCRATES. But if the dear-to-the-gods and the pious were the same, my dear Euthyphro, then, on the one hand, if the pious were loved because of being pious, the dear-to-the-gods would also be loved because of being dear-to-the-gods; and on the other hand, if the dear-to-the-gods were dear-to-the-gods because of being loved by gods, the pious would also be pious because of being loved. But as it is now, you see that the two are opposite, since they are entirely different from each other. For the one, because it is loved, is the sort of thing to be loved; the other, because it is the sort of thing to be loved, is loved.

11a

And probably, Euthyphro, when you are asked what ever the pious is, you don't wish to make clear to me its substance, but rather to speak of a certain affection<sup>31</sup> concerning it: that the pious is affected in being loved by all gods. But what it is, you haven't yet said. So if you please,<sup>32</sup> don't hide it from me, but say again from the beginning what ever the pious is, whether it is loved by gods or however it is affected—for we won't differ about this—but tell me eagerly, what are the pious and the impious?

b

EUTHYPHRO. But Socrates, I have no way of telling you what I have in mind. For whatever we put forward somehow always keeps going around for us and isn't willing to stay where we place it.

SOCRATES. The things said by you, Euthyphro, are likely to belong to our ancestor Daedalus. And if I were saying them and setting them down, perhaps you would make fun of me by saying that after all it's because of my kinship with him that my works in speech run away and aren't willing to stay where someone sets them down.<sup>33</sup> But as it is now, the suppositions are yours, and

c

<sup>31</sup>"Substance" is *ousia*, "beinghood"; "affection" is *pathos*, "that which happens to something when it is affected." These two terms became important parts of Aristotle's "technical" vocabulary.

<sup>32</sup>"If you please" is *ei soi philon*, literally, "if [it is] dear to you."

<sup>33</sup>Socrates perhaps playfully alleges a relationship between his father, who was said by later authors to have been a statuary, and Daedalus, a legendary Athenian master craftsman and

some other gibe is needed. For they aren't willing to stay still for you, as it seems to you yourself as well. 11c

EUTHYPHRO. It seems to me, Socrates, that the things said are in need of nearly the same gibe. For as to their going around and not staying in the same place, *I* didn't put them up to it. Rather, *you* seem to me the Daedalus, since, as far as I'm concerned, they would stay as they were. d

SOCRATES. Then probably, comrade, I have become more clever at the art than that man, insofar as he made only his own things not stay still, while I, besides my own things, also do this to those of others, as is likely. And in particular, for me the most exquisite part of the art is that I am involuntarily wise. For I would wish rather for the speeches to stay still for me and to be placed unmoved, than, in addition to the wisdom of Daedalus, to get the money of Tantalus.<sup>34</sup> e

But enough of this. Since you seem to me to be fastidious, I myself will take an eager part in showing you how you may teach me about the pious. And don't get tired out before the end. See if it doesn't seem necessary to you that all the pious is just.

EUTHYPHRO. To me it does.

SOCRATES. And is all the just pious? Or is the pious all just, while the just is not all pious, but part of it is pious, part something else? 12a

EUTHYPHRO. I don't follow, Socrates, what is being said.

SOCRATES. And yet you are no less younger than I am than you are wiser. But as I say, you are being fastidious because of your wealth of wisdom. Come, you blessed man, exert yourself, for it isn't even hard to understand what I am saying. I am saying the opposite of what the poet composed who said:

Zeus, the one who enclosed and planted all these things,  
You are not willing to speak of; for where dread is, there too is  
awe.<sup>35</sup> b

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inventor who was reputed to have constructed statues that could move about by themselves. (See also *Alcibiades* I 121a and *Meno* 97d.) Socrates denies any connection with his father's (or his father's ancestor's) art here, but he identifies himself closely with his mother's art of midwifery in the *Theaetetus*, which immediately precedes the *Euthyphro* (see Introduction n. 6).

<sup>34</sup>Tantalus, by tradition a king and a son of Zeus, was proverbial for his wealth. Having been admitted to the gods' company, he stole their food and gave it to his mortal acquaintances (Pindar, *Olympian* I.55–64). In another story he cut up his son Pelops and served him to the gods, who had come to dine with him, in a gruesome stew. His punishment for these crimes was to be eternally "tantalized" by the presence of food and drink that he could never quite reach.

<sup>35</sup>According to a scholiast, these lines are from Stasinus, a post-Homeric poet who was the supposed author of the lost *Cypria*, an epic poem describing the events of the Trojan war up to

Now I differ with the poet in this. Shall I tell you how?

12b

EUTHYPHRO. Quite.

SOCRATES. It doesn't seem to me that "where dread is, there too is awe." For many seem to me to dread when they dread diseases and poverty and many other such things, but to be in awe of none of these things that they dread. Doesn't it seem so to you too?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. But that "where awe is, there too is dread." For doesn't anyone who feels awe and shame in some matter also fear and dread a reputation for villainy?

c

EUTHYPHRO. Of course he dreads it.

SOCRATES. Then it is not correct to say, "where dread is, there too is awe," but rather "where awe is, there too is dread"—not, however, "wherever dread is, everywhere is awe." For I suppose that dread extends further than awe. For awe is part of dread, just as "odd" is part of "number." Hence not "wherever 'number' is, there too is 'odd,'" but "where 'odd' is, there too is 'number.'" Surely you follow me now?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. Now this is the sort of thing I was asking when I was speaking before: is it "where 'just' is, there too is 'pious' "? Or "where 'pious' is, there too is 'just,'" but "where 'just' is, everywhere is not 'pious' "? Is the pious part of the just? Shall we say so, or does it seem otherwise to you?

d

EUTHYPHRO. No, but this is so. You appear to me to speak correctly.

SOCRATES. Then see what comes after this. If the pious is part of the just, then we need to discover, as is likely, what part of the just the pious would be. Now if you were asking me about one of the things mentioned just now, such as what part of number is the even and what this number happens to be, I would say "whatever is not scalene but rather isosceles."<sup>36</sup> Doesn't it seem so to you?

EUTHYPHRO. It does to me.

SOCRATES. You too, then, try to teach me what part of the just is

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the point where the *Iliad* begins. (Another manuscript reads "showed affection for" instead of "enclosed." Burnet's Oxford text, departing from all the manuscripts, reads: "Even he who planted all these things is not willing to quarrel with Zeus, who wrought it.") Socrates calls particular attention to the poet's activity by the expression he uses to introduce this quotation: "what the poet composed who said," literally, "what the maker made who made" (*ho poiētēs epoiēsen ho poiēsas*). —The meaning of *aidōs*, here translated "awe," extends from "a sense of shame" to "respect" to "reverence."

<sup>36</sup>"Scalene" means "limping" or "unequal"; "isosceles" is "equal-legged." An even number is composed of two equal parts or "legs," while an odd number can only be divided into unequal parts.



pious, so that we may also tell Meletus not to do us injustice any longer and not to indict us for impiety,<sup>37</sup> on the ground that we have already learned sufficiently from you the things both reverent and pious and the things not.

12e

EUTHYPHRO. Then it seems to me, Socrates, that that part of the just is reverent as well as pious which concerns the tendance of the gods, while that which concerns the tendance of human beings is the remaining part of the just.

SOCRATES. And what you say appears noble to me, Euthyphro, but I am still in need of a little something. For I don't yet comprehend which tendance you are naming. Surely you aren't saying that that concerning gods is of the same sort as the tendances concerning other things—for surely we do speak of them? For instance, we say that not everyone has knowledge of tending horses, but rather the one skilled with horses, don't we?

13a

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. For surely skill with horses is a tendance of horses.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Nor does everyone have knowledge of tending dogs, but rather the huntsman.<sup>38</sup>

EUTHYPHRO. Just so.

SOCRATES. For surely the huntsman's skill is a tendance of dogs.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes.

b

SOCRATES. And the herdsman's skill is a tendance of cattle?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. And piety and reverence<sup>39</sup> are a tendance of gods, Euthyphro? Is this what you are saying?

EUTHYPHRO. I am.

SOCRATES. Doesn't every tendance bring about the same thing? For instance, something like this: Is it for a certain good and benefit of the one tended, just as you see that the horses tended by the skill with horses are benefited and become better? Or don't they seem so to you?

EUTHYPHRO. They do to me.

SOCRATES. And surely the same goes for the dogs tended by the huntsman's skill, and the cattle by the herdsman's skill, and all the others likewise? Or do you suppose the tendance is for the harm of the one tended?

c

EUTHYPHRO. By Zeus, not I!

<sup>37</sup>The term is *asebeia*. "Reverent," later in this sentence and in the next sentence, is *eusebes*. See n. 18.

<sup>38</sup>"Huntsman" is *kynēgetikos*, literally, "one skilled in leading dogs."

<sup>39</sup>"Reverence" is *eusebeia*. See n. 18.

SOCRATES. But for his benefit?

EUTHYPHRO. Of course.

SOCRATES. So is piety too, being a tendance of gods, a benefit to the gods, and does it make the gods better? And would you concede that whenever you do something pious, you make one of the gods better by your work?

EUTHYPHRO. By Zeus, not I!

SOCRATES. No, and neither do I suppose, Euthyphro, that this is what you are saying. Far from it. Rather, I asked what tendance of the gods you were speaking of because I didn't believe that you were saying that it is of this sort.

EUTHYPHRO. And you were correct, Socrates; for I am not saying it is of this sort.

SOCRATES. Well, then. But then what tendance of gods would piety be?

EUTHYPHRO. The one with which slaves tend their masters, Socrates.

SOCRATES. I understand. It would be a certain skillful service<sup>40</sup> to gods, as is likely.

EUTHYPHRO. Certainly.

SOCRATES. So could you tell me this: the skillful service to doctors happens to be a skillful service for producing what work? Don't you suppose it is for producing health?

EUTHYPHRO. I do.

SOCRATES. What about the skillful service to shipwrights? It is a skillful service for producing what work?

EUTHYPHRO. Clearly, Socrates, for producing a ship.

SOCRATES. And surely that to housebuilders is for producing a house?

EUTHYPHRO. Yes.

SOCRATES. Then tell me, best of men: the skillful service to gods would be a skillful service for producing what work? It is clear that you know, since you assert that you know at least the divine things most nobly of human beings.

EUTHYPHRO. And what I say is true, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then tell me, before Zeus, what is that altogether noble work which the gods produce, using us as servants?

EUTHYPHRO. Many noble things, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Yes, and so do the generals, my dear man. Neverthe-

13C

d

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14a

<sup>40</sup>"Skillful service" is *hypēretikē*, a term (its *-kē* ending indicating expertise) apparently coined by Socrates by analogy with the names of other arts and skills.

less, you could easily tell me their main one, that they produce victory in war. Or not?

14a

EUTHYPHRO. Of course.

SOCRATES. The farmers too, I suppose, produce many noble things. Nevertheless their main product is the food from the earth.

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. What about the many noble things that the gods produce? What is their main product?

EUTHYPHRO. I also told you a little while ago, Socrates, that to learn precisely how all these things are is a rather lengthy work. However, I tell you simply that if someone has knowledge of how to say and do things gratifying to the gods by praying and sacrificing, these are the pious things. And such things preserve private families as well as the communities of cities. The opposites of the things gratifying are impious,<sup>41</sup> and they overturn and destroy everything.

b

SOCRATES. You could have told me much more briefly, Euthyphro, if you wished, the main point of what I was asking. But you are not eager to teach me; that is clear. For you turned away just now, when you were at the very point at which, if you had answered, I would already have learned piety sufficiently from you. But as it is—for it is necessary that the lover follow the beloved<sup>42</sup> wherever he leads—again, what do you say the pious and piety are? Isn't it a certain kind of knowledge of sacrificing and praying?

c

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, I say so.

SOCRATES. Isn't sacrificing giving gifts to the gods, while praying is making requests of the gods?

EUTHYPHRO. Very much so, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then piety would be a knowledge of requesting from and giving to gods, from this argument.

d

EUTHYPHRO. You have comprehended what I said, Socrates, quite nobly.

SOCRATES. Yes, for I am desirous, my dear man, of your wisdom and I am applying my mind to it, so that whatever you say won't fall to the ground in vain. But tell me, what is this service to the gods? Do you say that it requests from and gives to them?

EUTHYPHRO. I do.

<sup>41</sup>The word is *asebes* (see n. 18).

<sup>42</sup>The words for lover and beloved here are related to *erōs*, passionate sexual love, not *philia*, the friendly love mentioned earlier in "what the gods love" (n. 25).

SOCRATES. Then wouldn't correct requesting be to request the things we need from them? 14d

EUTHYPHRO. Certainly.

SOCRATES. And again, is correct giving to give them as gifts in return the things they happen to need from us? For surely it wouldn't be artful for a giver to bring someone gifts of which he has no need. e

EUTHYPHRO. What you say is true, Socrates.

SOCRATES. Then piety, Euthyphro, would be a certain art of commerce for gods and human beings with each other.

EUTHYPHRO. Yes, commerce, if it's more pleasing to you to give it this name.

SOCRATES. But it's not at all more pleasing to me unless it happens to be true. Tell me, what benefit for the gods does there happen to be from the gifts that they get from us? As to what they give, it is clear to everyone, for there is no good for us that they do not give. But as to what they get from us, how are they benefited? Or do we have so much of an advantage over them<sup>43</sup> in our commerce, that we get all the good things from them, while they get nothing from us? 15a

EUTHYPHRO. But do you suppose, Socrates, that the gods are benefited from the things they get from us?

SOCRATES. Well, Euthyphro, what ever would these gifts from us to the gods be?

EUTHYPHRO. What else do you suppose but honor and respect, and, as I was just saying, gratitude?

SOCRATES. Is the pious then gratifying, Euthyphro, but not beneficial or dear to the gods? b

EUTHYPHRO. I for one suppose it is of all things most dear.

SOCRATES. Then this again, as is likely, is the pious: what is dear to the gods.

EUTHYPHRO. Very much so.

SOCRATES. So in saying this, will you wonder if it is apparent that your arguments don't stay still but walk about? And will you accuse me of being the Daedalus who is responsible for making them walk about, when you yourself, being much more artful than Daedalus, even make them go around in a circle? Or don't you perceive that our argument has gone around and come back to the same place? For surely you remember that it became apparent to us c

<sup>43</sup>"To have an advantage over" or "to get the better of" is *pleonektein*, literally "to have more." This "getting the better of others" is praised by Thrasyarchus in his defense of injustice (*Republic* 344a).



earlier that the pious and the dear-to-the-gods are not the same but different from each other. Or don't you remember?

15c

EUTHYPHRO. I do.

SOCRATES. So aren't you aware now that you are asserting that what is dear to the gods is pious? Does this turn out to be anything else but dear-to-the-gods, or not?

EUTHYPHRO. Quite so.

SOCRATES. Therefore either we weren't agreeing nobly before, or, if we did agree nobly then, we aren't setting it down correctly now.

EUTHYPHRO. It's likely.

SOCRATES. Then we must consider again from the beginning what the pious is, since I will not voluntarily give up out of cowardice until I learn it. Do not dishonor me, but apply your mind in every way as much as possible and tell me the truth now. For if in fact any human being knows, you do, and like Proteus,<sup>44</sup> you must not be let go until you tell. For if you didn't know plainly the pious and the impious, there is no way that you would ever have attempted to prosecute an elderly man; your father, for murder on behalf of a hired man. Rather, as to the gods, you would have dreaded the risk that you would not do it correctly, and as to human beings, you would have been ashamed. But as it is now, I know well that you suppose that you know plainly the pious and the not pious. So tell me, Euthyphro, best of men, and don't hide what you hold it to be.

d

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EUTHYPHRO. Some other time, then, Socrates. For now I am in a hurry to go somewhere, and it is time for me to go away.

SOCRATES. Such things you are doing, comrade! By leaving, you are throwing me down from a great hope I had: that by learning from you the things pious and the things not, I would be released from Meletus' indictment. For I hoped to show him that I have now become wise in the divine things from Euthyphro, and that I am no longer acting unadvisedly because of ignorance or making innovations concerning them, and especially that I would live better for the rest of my life.

16a

<sup>44</sup>Proteus, an immortal and unerring old man of the sea who serves the god Poseidon, answers the questions of mortals if he can be caught and held fast, although he attempts to escape by assuming the shapes of animals, water, and fire. Menelaus, instructed by the goddess Eidotheia ("divine *eidos*"—see n. 20), with difficulty succeeds in catching Proteus and learns what he must do to return home safely after the Trojan War from Egypt, where he has been stranded by contrary winds: he must offer sacrifices to Zeus and the other gods. (*Odyssey* IV. 351–569.)